REMARKS

The Office Action dated August 13, 2003 has been reviewed, and the application is amended herein in an effort to place same in condition for allowance. Reconsideration of the application is requested.

It was noted during preparation of this Response that reference "AR" under "Other Documents" on Form PTO-1449 as returned by the Examiner was not initialed. The undersigned accordingly requests that the Examiner acknowledge consideration of the above reference by initialing a copy of Form PTO-1449 and returning same to the undersigned with the next written communication.

Claims 1, 5-7, 11-15, 18, 20 and 24-28 are amended herein solely for clarification purposes. Claims 9, 17 and 21 are amended for clarification purposes, and also to include the subject matter of Claims 10, 33 and 22, respectively. Claims 10, 22 and 33 are cancelled herein.

Claims 1, 6, 7 and 9-33 stand rejected under 35 USC 102 as anticipated by Petersson (U.S. Patent No. 5,752,462), and Claim 5 stands rejected under 35 USC 103 as obvious over Petersson '462. Petersson discloses an inflation for a teat cup assembly of a milking machine, which inflation includes a hollow barrel 12, a cylindrical head 14 having a mouthpart 20 at the upper end of the barrel 12, and a hollow tailpiece 30 which extends from the lower end of the barrel 12.

Independent Claims 1 and 17 each recite that the centre piece is configured to have a greater flexibility than the first and second end portions, and that this flexibility increases towards a middle of the centre piece. It was assumed for the purposes of this argument that the Examiner is equating the upper end of the tailpiece 30 of Petersson including transition section 32 with the "first end portion" recited in both of independent Claims 1 and 17, and the lower end of tailpiece 30 with the "second end portion" recited in

these claims. It is submitted that there is **no teaching or suggestion whatsoever** in Petersson that the center region of the tailpiece 30 disposed between and connecting the upper and lower ends thereof is in any way configured to have a greater flexibility than **both** of these ends. Further, Petersson, lacking this teaching, certainly does **not teach or suggest** that this flexibility of the center region **increases** towards a middle of the center region. In this regard, there is no mention or concern with the flexibility of the tailpiece 30 in Petersson, or any discussion whatsoever of any structural characteristics of the tailpiece 30 which enable same to have the flexibility as defined in Claims 1 and 17.

As discussed in the instant specification, when the milking process is underway and the milking unit is being handled, the positions of the teat cups and of the heavy directional valve change due to mechanical influences and pressure fluctuations. The above feature relating to the flexibility of the centre piece as defined in Claims 1 and 17 permits the teat cup to follow these movements, without these small changes in position being transferred to the directional valve and thus to the neighboring teat cups. Further, the flexibility of the centre piece as defined in Claims 1 and 17 has the effect of reducing the mechanical forces in the areas of connection between the first end portion and the teat cup and the second end portion and the multiway valve, which in turn reduces fractures due to material fatigue in these areas.

In the event that the undersigned has misinterpreted the Examiner's application of the Petersson reference as discussed above, it was assumed for the purpose of the following argument that the Examiner is equating the barrel 12 in Petersson with the "first end portion" recited in Claims 1 and 17. In this regard, the barrel 12 clearly has a greater flexibility as compared to the remainder of the inflation, since, upon application of a milking vacuum to the interior of

the tailpiece 30 and upon the application of atmospheric pressure at the exterior of the barrel 12, the barrel 12 must collapse so as to periodically interrupt the milk flow. The tailpiece 30, contrary to the above, must maintain its interior diameter upon application of the milking vacuum while the atmospheric pressure is acting upon the exterior of the tailpiece 30. As can clearly be seen in Figure 2 of Petersson, the thickness of the wall of the barrel 12 is less than that of the tailpiece 30. In contrast, Claims 1 and 17 recite that the centre piece disposed between the first and second end portions is configured to have a greater flexibility than the first and second end portions.

Further, Claims 1 and 17 recite that the centre piece includes reinforcement elements. These reinforcement elements accordingly stabilize and reinforce the centre piece of the instant invention having the flexibility as defined in these claims. The reinforcing rings 36 in Petersson are provided at the distal end of the tailpiece 30 (ostensibly corresponding to the "second end portion" in Claims 1 and 17 pursuant to this argument), and are not located at any centre portion in Petersson. Thus, the reinforcing rings 36 in Petersson presumably provide enhanced stability close to the valve, and do not appear to provide any enhanced stability in the middle of any centre piece in Petersson.

Claims 5-7, 9, 11-16, 18-21, 23-32, and added Claims 34 and 35 depend from what are believed to be allowable Claims 1 and 17, are believed allowable therewith, and include additional features which further distinguish over Petersson. For example, Claim 9 recites that the first and second end portions each have formed thereon a reinforcement member, the reinforcement members being disposed on respective opposite sides of the centre piece, the reinforcement members each comprising an enlarged portion of material having a wall thickness which exceeds the wall thickness of the respective

residual area of the corresponding end portion, the wall thicknesses of the reinforcement members and the residual areas being defined transversely relative to a longitudinal dimension of the milk hose. In Petersson, the lower end of the tailpiece 30 beneath the reinforcing rings includes no such enlarged reinforcement member. Instead, the lower end of the tailpiece 30 beneath the rings 36 has a constant wall thickness throughout. Claim 21 is similar to Claim 9 and is believed allowable for similar reasons.

Further, Claim 12 recites that a wall thickness of the centre piece, as defined transversely relative to a longitudinal dimension of the milk hose, decreases from the first and second end portions in directions towards the middle of the centre piece. The portion of tailpiece 30 in Petersson which includes the rings 36 (ostensibly corresponding to the centre piece) has no such wall thickness which decreases in directions from the end portions towards the middle. Instead, the wall thickness is constant, except at the rings 36, wherein the wall thickness increases. Claim 24 contains language similar to Claim 12 and is believed allowable for similar reasons.

Claims 13-16 as well as Claims 25-28 recite additional features relating to wall thicknesses of the reinforcement elements and the intermediate area between the reinforcement elements, and Petersson neglects to disclose, teach or suggest such features.

Added Claims 34 and 35 recite that the reinforcement elements are distributed along substantially the entire longitudinal extent of the centre piece as defined between the respective reinforcement members, and are believed allowable as presented since Petersson's inflation includes no such structure.

In view of the above, the instant application is believed to be in condition for allowance, and action toward that end is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

Liane L. Churney

LLC/jp

FLYNN, THIEL, BOUTELL
& TANIS, P.C.
2026 Rambling Road
Kalamazoo, MI 49008-1631
Phone: (269) 381-1156
Fax: (269) 381-5465

Dale H. Thiel Reg. No. 24 323
David G. Boutell Reg. No. 25 072
Ronald J. Tanis Reg. No. 22 724
Terryence F. Chapman Reg. No. 32 549
Mark L. Maki Reg. No. 36 589
David S. Goldenberg Reg. No. 31 257
Sidney B. Williams, Jr. Reg. No. 24 949
Liane L. Churney Reg. No. 40 694
Brian R. Tumm Reg. No. 36 328
Robert J. Sayfie Reg. No. 37 714

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